

Dear members of the Committee,

Thank you for giving me the honor of representing my Vocational school at this conference today. My name is Elina Petrashkevich, and I am representing Sound School in New Haven, a place that gives the students an opportunity to pursue a unique, out-of-the-ordinary High School experience. I am in my senior year and am enrolled in a second year course of Biotechnology. It is a challenging science course that reaches far beyond a classroom education. New Haven is known as the first town to offer High School Vocational Experiences and I say that with a lot of pride in me. Having hands on experience has not only made learning much more engaging, it has also provided me with a clear path of what I would like my future to be like. After the first course, I became very interested in genetics. Conducting experiments with electrophoresis gel gave me an outlook of what I might be doing in the future. Electrophoresis is used to isolate and sort DNA based on size. An agarose gel is placed into an apparatus and the DNA fills wells. The DNA can then be extracted and analyzed. This is a simple experiment, but an informative one. It is also what had caught my interest in genetics in the first place. It was interesting to see how DNA can be manipulated and isolated. This methodology is practiced by universities and labs around the world. However, the equipment is very expensive. A simple blotting system may be around five hundred dollars not to mention the cost of the gel. If my school had the opportunity to get updated equipment or more materials, not only would more experiments be conducted, but there would be a stronger desire to learn and would better prepare us for careers in an ever-growing field. My

classmates and I share a belief that learning can be difficult, but it is made easier by experiential learning. Needless to say, money is an issue and might always be, however with increased funding, this program can blossom and provide students with inspiration and education at the same time. Please increase funding for agri-science programs by adopting the ECS Task Force School Choice Funding recommendation into the Governor's Proposed Budget. Our School truly needs to uphold the opportunities that it has been providing from the turn of the century. Thank you for this opportunity to present my ideas and proposal to help better my school and its future students. I hope you truly consider this idea.

Sincerely,

Elina Petrashkevich